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ABSTRACT

The future of the American community, technical, and junior colleges will depend on the ability of educational leaders to shape the environment in which these institutions must function. The advent of the information-age, increasing competition for the recent high school graduate, and the current emphasis on education reform are examples of environmental changes which present community college leaders with many opportunities to determine the future of the open door colleges. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) is making a significant national effort to shape the future environment. The priority aspects of AACJC's "game plan," as stated in its Public Policy Agenda, intend to: (1) promote the associate degree as an assurance of quality among employers and students; (2) enhance the high school/community college connection, by stressing academic standards and by developing articulated technical preparation training programs beginning during the junior year of high school and culminating with an associate degree; (3) develop employer/community college partnerships; and (4) build public understanding of community technical, and junior colleges, especially by gaining attention from the national media. With this plan, the mission of opportunity with excellence in community, technical, and junior colleges can be strengthened and clarified. (MPH)

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SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

by

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Washington, D. C.

Presented to

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Orlando, Florida
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SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

There have been three particularly significant and historic developments in American higher education. One of them was the development of the land-grant universities. These great and serviceable institutions have accomplished much for this country, particularly in their agricultural extension programs.

The second historic development was the enactment of the GI Bill. This has been a terrific federal government investment in human resource development. We talk about our natural resources in this country and how we must conserve them. But, the most precious resource we have in our country today is the human resource. Is it time community college leaders initiated a new national discussion on human resource development?

The third significant development in American higher education has been the establishment of community, technical, and junior colleges. These colleges have served as the road of access into higher education and are providing tremendous opportunities for millions of citizens...and doing that in an excellent way. And those of you here today can, in great measure, take credit for providing the leadership for this great development. Similarly, it is we who must now think to the future and provide the leadership for community, technical, and junior colleges in the decades to come.

Community colleges are relatively young in this country. In many ways the community college movement began to blossom in the early 1960s. As an example, I helped found Lane Community College, in Eugene, Oregon, in 1964-65. Lane Community College, along with a large number of other colleges, has just celebrated its 20th anniversary. The 1960s and 1970s were an exuberant and exhilarating time for community college leaders. Today, community, technical, and junior colleges enroll a stunning 4.7 million students in college credit classes across the country on 1,222 campuses. Another 4 million individuals are taking noncredit classes. Some 8.7 million Americans were enrolled in one or more community college classes in the fall term of 1985. What a fantastic educational enterprise. What a truly American story,...

But, what about tomorrow? What does the future hold for our open-door colleges? The environment in 1986 is much different than when I was founding Lane Community College in 1964-65. For one thing, the environment is much more competitive today. The Department of Defense indicates that they are now recruiting one out of eight able-bodied young males, 18 years of age, to support the all volunteer service. They indicate that by 1995 it will be necessary to recruit about one out of four able-bodied males, 18 years of age, if they are to maintain their quotas. The future 18 year old is destined to

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By:

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be the most wined and dined individual in the history of this country. Compound the need of the armed services with potentially the greatest skill-shortage our country has ever known as older workers leave the work force and fewer young people come into the work force. Who will keep our airplanes flying? Our water running? Our goods and services sold? Our laws enforced? Our hospitals operating? Business and industry will also be competing for workers. Add to this scenario the competition among various colleges and universities for the recent high school graduate, and that all adds up to a highly competitive environment.

The transition of our society from an industrial-age to an information-age also presents community colleges with another new environment. The information-age offers community colleges many new opportunities. Many of the good jobs of the future will require the associate degree.

The recent plethora of education reform reports have riveted attention on education. It has been a long time since the American public has been as interested and concerned about education. The information-age, the competitive environment, and the education reform reports present community, technical, and junior colleges with some wonderful opportunities. Do college leaders see these issues as an opportunity, or are they viewed as just another problem? Will the community college leaders of the future be as visionary... as creative...as resourceful as the leaders of the past? What is in store for community colleges over these next 20 years? The plans developed today...and the vision of the leaders today, will in large measure, determine the future of these open-door colleges.

The matter is clear...but the solutions are often murky. We either attempt to shape the environment in which we live and work or allow the environment to shape us. If we don't like our circumstances, we must get up and make some we do like. George Bernard Shaw states the case this way:

> "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them."

The AACJC Board of Directors has chosen the path of making a significant national effort to shape the environment in which community, technical, and junior colleges must live and work...to develop some new circumstances.

Here are some priority aspects of the AACJC "game plan" for shaping the environment as we move into the 21st Century:

- <u>Promote the associate degree</u>.

  This can be achieved in many ways...but the flagship effort will be to help employers and four-year college and university colleagues recognize the associate degree as a degree of quality. Employers are being asked to include "associate degree preferred" in their employment ads for the mid-range of occupations. This effort must begin within each community college...to practice what we preach in our own hiring practices.

- o Enhance the high school/community college connection.

  There can be many aspects of this effort, but one key part of the action plan is to lead in the development of the 2 + 2 tech prep/associate degree program in cooperation with high schools. A corollary activity will be to help high school faculty, counselors, and students understand and value the associate degree.

- o Develop employer/community college partnerships.

  The community college/employer partnership business is beginning to blossom all across the nation. It is now a rare college that does not have one or more employer partnership efforts underway.

- o Building public understanding of community, technical, and junior colleges.

  The efforts described above are certainly aimed at building understanding. In addition to these efforts, a corollary activity is now underway aimed at the national media. The work of community colleges is so local or regional in nature that it is a rare occurrence when the national media (Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, USA TODAY, and network television) will pick up a community college story or feature. AACJC has initiated several efforts aimed at gaining precisely that kind of attention from the national media.

These are just four of the eleven points in the 1986 AACJC Public Policy Agenda. There are other important aspects in the long-range game plan, but these four tend to link together and have become the "point" efforts in attempting to shape the national environment, in which our colleges will exist over the coming decades. There are many other important aspects of community college work not covered here. This does not mean they are unimportant. It only means that at any given time a relatively small organization like AACJC can give priority attention to only a few programs. As former President John F. Kennedy said in surveying the awesome challenges of the presidency, "The ocean is so big and my spoon is so small."

Let's state our challenges another way. Community, technical, and junior colleges are facing a relatively new set of the 3 R challenges. The first of the 3 Rs is recruitment - recruitment of students. The second R is retention - retention of students...retaining more of the students that are already in our classes. The third R is resource development. Many of our colleges have not been particularly active over the country in developing financial resources from private-sector giving. We could well add a fourth R for renewal of faculty and staff.

If you do not like that set of Rs, and your college does not need to work at that set of Rs, then there is a possible fifth R...to grab our attention, and that is called retrenchment. Most of our college leaders are not very good at retrenchment, plus it is not much fun to work in a retrenchment environment. The AACJC Board of Directors has directed the association to work on a national basis on the first set of three Rs...recruitment, retention, and resource development. If we can motivate each of our colleges

across the 50 states and territories to be singing out of the same hymnbook in the sense of college by college effort, we believe we can shape the future environment rather than letting the environment shape us.

The first element of our national "shaping the environment effort" is to popularize the associate degree. Now that effort must begin at home. How many community colleges list " associate degree preferred" in their own help-wanted ads? It is not really quite "cricket" to ask the Fortune 1000 companies to place "associate degree preferred" in their help-wanted advertisements for the mid-range of occupations, if our own colleges are not practicing what we preach. We urge our member colleges to join us in popularizing the associate degree. It is central to the mission of the community, technical, and junior colleges. Now, we must be quick to add that community colleges do many other important things along with offering associate degrees. Certificate programs are important, adult and continuing education extension classes are important, community services are important. But underneath all of this is the associate degree...it is central to the mission of the community college.

Community colleges may have suffered a "bum-rap" from the students that come to take just a class or two...and may not even complete these classes. They then go to a prospective employer and say, "I am a student," or "I have been a student" at X Community College. They may not be able to read, or write, or compute very well. The employer then wonders, "What is going on down at that college?" There is no way community colleges can be held accountable for the part-time student. At the same time, community colleges must keep their doors open. Access is a wonderful and precious word in the community college lexicon, but the colleges cannot be held "bottom-line" accountable for the part-time student who takes a class, or a piece of a class. But if the prospective employer were to ask for the associate degree as a qualification, then the colleges could then guarantee someone who can read, write, compute, and be technically competent, or qualified to transfer to upper-division collegiate work. The associate degree provides employers with quality assurance.

Some of our colleagues across the country are asking if we are putting too much emphasis on the associate degree? Our question back to them is this: Is there a better quality assurance indicator than the associate degree? If employers will request the associate degree of prospective employees, they will be helping our colleges create a demand for that degree, and also will be helping to popularize that degree. And, in turn, our colleges will be doing a tremendous good turn for employers because they will be providing them with quality assurance...it is a quid pro quo that makes a lot of good sense!

Another top priority in our shaping the environment effort is the development of employer/college partnership programs as a new form of resource and economic development. When we talk about employers we are not just talking about business and industry. We are talking about small business, large business, labor unions, and public employers. State government is a big employer...the military is the biggest employer in the country. City government, county government, school districts, are all public employers, and we should not overlook them in our partnership development efforts.

In many ways, the community college adult and continuing extension programs, and the partnership development efforts are beginning to become a

modern version of the land-grant university extension programs. What the land-grant university extension program has done for an agricultural economy, the community colleges are beginning to do for an information-age economy. After nearly five years of a national initiative in the partnership development effort, it is now a rare college that does not have one or more employer/college partnership programs. It is a wonderful development, and it is an important part of our "shaping the environment effort."

But, allow me to zero-in on another top priority: strengthening the high school/college connection. Have community colleges given an unintended negative signal to some high school students, high school faculty, and maybe their parents with our term "open door?" Please do not misunderstand me. I have no intention of backing away from the term "open-door", or the word "access." But, we must examine the messages we are communicating. Some high school students appear to have interpreted the term open door to mean that they can do almost anything in high school, prepare almost any way they wish, and still be successful in a community college program. Nothing could be further from the truth. The unprepared high school student too often does not finish even one semester at the community college. In this regard, community colleges have a retention or a dropout problem of our own to solve. Isn't it time for community colleges to give some clear signals to high school students by stressing the exit requirements from any program including associate degree requirements?

A recent article in the Fresno Bee (California) newspaper told the story of a reporter who had been following some of the members of the high school class of 1986. On this particular day the reporter was following a student by the name of Anthony.

> "A bell rang, Anthony and his friends went off to their sixth period...and another lunch hour was over. Anthony's next class was yearbook production. His other classes for his senior year are physical education, photography, government, student leadership, and lab assistant in a social science class where he grades papers for the teacher."

Anthony does not have in his senior year of high school a math class, a science class, a literacy course, or a technical education course. I contend there are too many Anthonys marking time, and for them the senior year in high school is nearly a waste of time. The newspaper story goes on to say,

> "Anthony said that after graduation he hoped to find a full-time job. He would like to work for the city of Fresno like his Dad...if nothing else works out, he said he can always go to Fresno City College."

Please do not view this story as a put-down of Fresno City College. Most of us have heard the same statement from high school students all across the country.

It is my observation that the high school student that sits between the 25 yard line and the 75 yard line on the academic playing field has been completely overlooked in the education reform reports of the last two or three years. I didn't find much discussion in these reports about the students in the two middle quartiles of the typical high school student body. As I have reviewed the high school programs of these middle quartile students, most of

them are experiencing an unfocused, general education program. In 1969, 12 percent of the high school students identified themselves as being in a general education program. In 1981, in the High School and Beyond Study by the National Center for Educational Statistics, about half of the students (when including the high school dropouts) identified themselves as being in a general education program. That is a dramatic shift in the high school program emphasis. And, the most damaging statistic of all is that two-thirds of the high school dropouts come from that unfocused general education program.

If there are two thoughts that sum up all of the education reform reports, it is these: we need more structure in the high school program, and we need more substance in the curriculum. High schools have done rather well with the college prep/baccalaureate degree student. These students receive a good education and community colleges are appreciative of enrolling these well-prepared students.

There is a miracle story on the other end of the high school program. American schools have done a wonderful thing for the handicapped students. You will find miracle stories about what the schools have done with the sensory handicapped, the physically handicapped, and the developmentally handicapped. On the two ends of the spectrum, schools accomplished much for individuals and for our country. It is the students who sit in the two middle quartiles that generally have not received the quality of education that will prepare them for their next step, whatever that step may be. I believe there is something that we as community, technical, and junior college leaders can do about that situation.

Community colleges can roll up their collective sleeves...go to their colleagues in the high schools and say--"Let's work together." High school personnel are, indeed, our colleagues. They are doing important work. By working together, community college and high school leaders can develop a better education for the Anthonys of this country.

There are many ways of working together...advancement placement...honors programs...and shared programs. But, what we are advocating for that student who sits between that 25 and 75 yard line is a coordinated four-year, tech prep/associate degree program that would begin in grade 11, and complete with an associate degree. It is a program with much structure and substance. As a side benefit this program could help popularize the associate degree with high school counselors and faculty members. They must understand that the associate degree is a degree of quality.

How do we go about getting this program initiated? First of all, the boards...the policy-makers...must meet together and give some clear signals that they want high school and community college personnel to work together. Community college leaders must get together with their colleagues: the school superintendents and high school principals. They must develop and implement action plans. But, the bottom line in the effort will require college faculty talking with high school faculty on a long and sustained basis. Curriculum coordination really won't happen until college faculty and high school faculty dialogue together.

Whether you agree with the tech-prep/associate degree kind of program or not, just the fact that communication will be taking place is important. High school folk will be learning about the associate degree...understanding who you are and what you are doing.

The 2 + 2 tech prep/associate degree program is also a long-range method for helping our colleges in the recruitment department. Once a high school student begins grade 11 with a meaningful program, he or she may be around to complete that associate degree program. In fact, with this kind of a program, I can't think who would lose. The students will win--they will receive a good education. The colleges will win because they will gain a much better prepared student. The high schools will win because they can raise the tone of the whole high school with programs of substance and structure. The employers will win because they will gain a much better quality employee.

Allow me to share with you a few important statistics. Out of 40 million students currently in elementary and secondary education, 11 million of them will not complete high school with today's 27 percent dropout rate. In some parts of the country the high school dropout rate is much higher. In urban America it is much higher. What happens to high school dropout students? Many of those students come and knock on the community college door five years later and say--"Help, what do I do with the rest of my life?" Thank God the community colleges are there, and you have done magnificent things. But must we always be on the remedial and catch-up end of this education business? How about moving to the front end of the education process?

We have been urging community college boards of trustees across the country to take out a full-page ad in the local newspaper once or twice a year as an open letter to eighth-graders. The message would go something like this:

"Dear Eighth Grader...

We are concerned about you and your future. We are particularly concerned about your high school preparation. As you plan your high school programs, we want you to know that you will need a good solid high school preparation to be successful in our community college programs. Community colleges may be open door colleges, but they have rigorous program exit requirements. Here are our high school preparation recommendations..."

We must be vigorous in stressing the quality exit requirements in our institutions. The associate degree is one of those exit requirements. What kind of high school preparation do you recommend for students? The universities have never been reluctant to tell community colleges which courses qualify for credit transfer and which do not. Furthermore, the universities have never been reluctant to tell high schools about the kind of preparation that is necessary to complete a college prep/baccalaureate degree program. I just don't understand the strange reluctance of community college leaders to give high school students equally clear signals about the high school preparation necessary for successfully negotiating a community college program. Is an unfocused high school preparation...the kind of program that Anthony is experiencing in his senior year...an adequate preparation to be successful in your community college programs? If community college leaders don't give those clear signals to high school students, who will? I believe community colleges could help reduce that high school dropout rate by helping students develop a clearer focus in their high school learning...they need a learning experience with structure, substance, and clear goals.

As I have read the education reform reports, many of the recommendations sound as though they assume that all high school students will probably

complete a baccalaureate degree. Allow me to quickly say that community colleges have a heavy obligation to encourage students to move on to the baccalaureate degree. However, the 1980 census revealed that 17 percent of the adult population in this country held a baccalaureate degree. You flip that coin over and that means 83 percent of adult Americans did not hold a baccalaureate degree in 1980. We have been doing some work with the Census Bureau because we want them to ask some questions about associate degrees in the 1990 census. The Census Bureau is projecting that about 25 percent of the adult population will hold a baccalaureate degree in 1990. Flip that coin over and it means that three out of four adult Americans are not likely to hold a baccalaureate degree in 1990. And so, we must bury the idea that everyone in the country must hold a baccalaureate degree to be respectable. Now, that statement does not disparage the baccalaureate degree. It is absolutely essential for entry into many occupations, and we ought to be encouraging more of our students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. More of our talented disadvantaged students, in particular, must be encouraged to move on into the baccalaureate degree programs. But what about the rest of the population? Don't they also deserve an excellent education?

In a recent television interview I was asked the questions: "Aren't too many students going to college today? Can colleges really have access and have quality? Can you really have an open door college and have quality?" My answer to this question is: A democratic nation does not have a choice. We must have both! We must have access...and we must have quality. But, please do not tell me that a baccalaureate degree is the only road to respectability and quality. Most students in the middle quartiles do not need more theoretical physics. But they do need physics. They need an applied physics. They do need math. They do need more emphasis upon communication skills. They do need exposure to the humanities. They must understand our culture and our history. They must be concerned about citizenship and community service. One of the great challenges facing community colleges is to balance and connect the practical arts with the liberal and fine arts. We think that we can best do that by working closely with our feeder high schools to carefully coordinate the curriculum, and provide continuity in learning for the student.

It was Eric Hoffer, that wonderful longshoreman-philosopher, who said, "We bring young people up in this culture and say don't waste your time, and then we allow them to waste their lives." We have too much human waste in our country, and we can't afford it. We can't afford it in any dimension, let alone the personal pathos that may be created. George Wythe, an eighteenth century law professor at William and Mary College, wrote to his former student Thomas Jefferson, and said, "Preach, my dear friend, preach a crusade against ignorance." I say to you my dear community college friends... preach my dear friends...preach a crusade against ignorance...a crusade against wasted human resources...a crusade of opportunity with excellence in the community, technical, and junior colleges of this great land. We will work as hard as we can at the national level, and I urge you to join with us in providing the leadership for shaping our environment for the next 20 years of our glorious history.

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